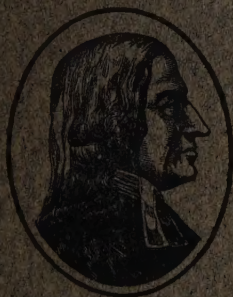


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**John Wesley's Conversion and
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By

Carl F. Eltzholtz



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John Wesley's Conversion and Sanctification



JOHN WESLEY was a child of God until he was about ten years old. He lived such a devoted and consistent life that his father admitted him to the Lord's Supper when he was only eight years old. When that terrible disease, small-pox, attacked him at that age he bore his sufferings with such Christian patience that his mother in writing about him to her absent husband remarks: "Jack has borne his disease bravely, like a man, and, indeed, like a Christian, without complaint." When Mr. Wesley in May, 1738, referred to his childhood experience he said that he believed that he had not sinned away this grace of God until he was about ten years old.

These facts show that the Lord had kept Wesley by His grace so that he

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had not by sinning extinguished that great and true light which lighteth every man, coming into the world (John 1, 9). He had kept "the free gift (that) came unto all men to justification of life" (Rom. 5, 18) until he was about ten years old; at that age he left his home for the Charterhouse School at London. He starts out for school as a Christian boy, but there he lost a great deal of that deep piety and Christian earnestness which had filled his heart and molded his character from the days of his infancy. In his journal for May 22-24, 1738, he writes concerning his experience at that time as follows: "The next six or seven years were spent at school; where, outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eyes of the world. However, I still read the Scriptures and said my prayers morning and evening." (Works, vol. III., p. 70.)

"When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter into holy

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orders. At the same time the providence of God directed me to Kempis's 'Christian's Pattern.' I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was, however, very angry at Kempis for being so strict, though I read him only in Dean Stanhope's translation. *Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before;** and meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had till now, *I began to alter the whole form of my conversation and to set in earnest upon a new life.* I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. . . . I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. *I began to aim at and pray for inward holiness."*

This was in 1725, and I believe it marks a turning-point in the life and experience of Wesley, and it will hereafter be seen that he regards it as such himself. When Wesley writes in his

* Italics are of C. F. E.

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journal that he was "almost continually guilty of outward sin" while attending the Charterhouse School and the University at Oxford, I believe that he here, as well as other places in his journal at this period, is judging himself too severely. When Wesley came in possession of more spiritual wisdom and a deeper Christian experience he made some corrections in his journal which puts himself in a more true and Scriptural light. Though he did not make any corrections in this place, I am satisfied that he is judging himself too hard.

Some time later, while at Savannah, Georgia, his experience was as follows: "*Before* I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly; but still I served it. I fell, and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness; sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. For as *in the former state** I had some foretastes of the terror of the law, so had I *in this* of the comforts of the Gospel."

* By "the former state" I suppose Wesley means the state in which he was before the turning point in 1725, referred to above.—C. F. E.

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He remarks further that he at that time "had many remarkable returns of prayer," and "many sensible comforts," which he calls "short anticipations of the life of faith."

Mr. Wesley, who had been absent from England two years and almost four months, returned to his native country on the first day of February, 1738. As soon as he came to London the Lord had (he remarks) prepared Peter Böhler for him, and this man of God became to Wesley what Ananias was to Paul—a spiritual guide. Wesley, who was seeking a deeper work of grace in his soul, was waiting upon the Lord to renew his strength; he desired "to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, to walk and not faint." Such were the groanings of his soul when he on that memorable Wednesday evening, May 24, 1738, "went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine," Wesley writes, "while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through

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faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved me from the law of sin and death." (Works, Vol. III., p. 74.)

This was another important epoch in the experience and spiritual life of Mr. Wesley. The great question to be answered in this connection, therefore, is: What did Wesley experience at Aldersgate Street, May 24, 1738? Was he converted to God? Or did the God of peace at that time, when his heart was so strangely warmed, sanctify him wholly? To answer these questions faithfully and intelligently, we must investigate two other questions: 1, What was the experience of Mr. Wesley prior to May 24, 1738? And 2, What was Mr. Wesley groaning after, aiming at, and praying for when his heart was so strangely warmed?

I. What was the experience of Mr. Wesley prior to May 24, 1738? This question can best be answered by reference to Wesley's own writings. On the 24th day of January, 1738, on

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his voyage from America to England, when he was about 160 leagues of *Land's End*, Wesley wrote: "My mind was now full of thought, part of which I write down as follows: 'I went to America to convert the Indians; but O! who shall convert me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?' " (Works, Vol. III., p. 55.) According to this statement, given by Wesley himself, it *seems* as if he went to America and returned to England as an unconverted man. And I have reason to believe that many in our own Church, as well as in other Churches, are confused in regard to this important question. They make up their opinion from this isolated statement without any further reference to what Wesley wrote a little further on, and therefore they take it for granted that he was unconverted at the time referred to. I have in my possession the writings of many different authors, who all refer to Mr. Wesley's conversion (some of them are of the highest standing) and they all, with but a few exceptions, are of the opinion that he was not converted

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when he went to America; but I differ from these authors and from all who agree with them in this respect. I believe that Wesley was converted to God when he went to America to preach the Gospel, and that this can be proven by the writings of Wesley himself.

When Wesley had arrived in England he wrote February 1, 1738: "It is now two years and almost four months since I left my native country in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity; but what have I learned myself in the meantime? Why (what I the least of all suspected), that I who went to America to convert others, was never myself converted to God. (I am not sure of this)." Now, please notice that this clause: "I am not sure of this," is put into the text of the journal by Mr. Wesley as a parenthesis. When he in after life had received more spiritual wisdom and a deeper Christian experience, he came to the conclusion that this remark was too strong, and he, therefore, in justice to himself, to the truth, and to his many followers, ap-

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pended this note in the later editions of his Journal. (This note was not printed in the second edition of Mr. Wesley's Journal). And it is not more than simple justice to the great founder of Methodism that—when writers, preachers, and others quote this Mr. Wesley's statement concerning his conversion—they also quote his appended note; but I regret to say that this is neglected very extensively; such treatment is, however, not fair, to say the least.

The faithful and accurate Tyerman (to whom I am indebted for several facts in this connection) has in his admirable "Life of Wesley" called due attention to the appended notes in Wesley's later editions of his Journal. Mr. Tyerman remarks: "He (Wesley) asserts that when he went to America, to convert the Indians, he was not himself converted; but in the appended note he adds: 'I am not sure of this.' Neither are we. By his conscientious severity in comparing himself with the standard of a perfect Christian, as contained in the New Testament, and by his imperfect and mystified views

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of the Scriptural plan of salvation, he might deprive himself of the filial confidence and joy belonging to a child of God; but we dare not affirm that he was a child of wrath because he was without the joy."

Little further on in Wesley's Journal we find the following foot-note: "I had even then the faith of a servant, though not that of a son." If we turn to Mr. Wesley's sermon "On Faith," we will learn what he nearly fifty years later meant by the faith of a servant. He says: "But what is the faith which is properly saving; which brings eternal salvation to all those who keep it to the end? It is such a divine conviction of God, and the things of God, as, even in its infant state, enables every one that possesses it to 'fear God and work righteousness.' And whosoever in every nation believes thus far, the apostle declares, is 'accepted of Him.' He actually is, at that very moment, in a state of acceptance. But he is at present only a *servant* of God, not properly a son. Meantime, let it be well observed that 'the wrath of God' no longer 'abideth on him.' Indeed,

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nearly fifty years ago, when the preachers, commonly called Methodists, began to preach that grand Scriptural doctrine, salvation by faith, they were not sufficiently apprized of the difference between a servant and a child of God. They did not clearly understand that even one 'who feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him.' In consequence of this, they were apt to make sad the hearts of those whom God had not made sad. For they frequently asked those who feared God, 'Do you know that your sins are forgiven?' And upon their answering 'No,' immediately replied, 'Then you are a child of the devil.' No; that does not follow. It might have been said (and it is all that can be said with propriety), 'Hitherto you are only a *servant*; you are not a child of God. You have already great reason to praise God that He has called you to His honorable service. Fear not. Continue crying unto Him, and you shall see greater things than these.' "

From these remarks it will be seen that Wesley nearly *fifty* years later believed that he at the time referred

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to was in possession of a saving faith, and that he was in a state of acceptance. He must, therefore, have been converted to God when he went to America.

"This, then, have I learned in the ends of the earth," continues Mr. Wesley, "that I 'am fallen short of the glory of God;' that my whole heart is 'altogether corrupt and abominable;' and, consequently, my whole life; (seeing it can not be, that an 'evil tree' should 'bring forth good fruit'); that 'alienated,' as I am, from the life of God, I am 'a child of wrath,' an heir of hell." As Wesley in after life felt that this assertion was too strong, he appended in a foot-note: "I believe not."

It will thus be seen that when Mr. Wesley had reached a higher religious experience and a profounder knowledge of the mysteries of God, the Gospel and true experimental religion, he found it to be his duty to correct and explain what he in his younger years had not clearly understood, and therefore he remarked that he did not believe that he at that time was

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“alienated” from the life of God and a “child of wrath.” “And,” remarks Mr. Tyerman, “if not a child of wrath, then, in his opinion, and after mature reflection, he had a right to think himself a child of grace and an heir of heaven.”

George Whitefield, who left England the day before Wesley reached his native country, landed in Georgia May 7, 1738. Here he had an opportunity to be acquainted with the missionary work of Wesley, and he writes as follows: “The good Mr. John Wesley has done in America is inexpressible. His name is very precious among the people, and he has laid a foundation that I hope neither men nor devils will ever be able to shake. Oh, that I may follow him as he has followed Christ!”

Who can for a moment believe that Whitefield would have given Wesley such a testimony if he had thought him to be an unconverted man?

The following remarks of Mr. Gambold, a man of fine genius and “of eminent holiness,” who afterwards left the Church of England and be-

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came a Moravian bishop, throws considerable light upon this question. While Wesley was in Georgia, Mr. Gambold wrote to one of his (Wesley's) relatives: "I could say a great deal about his private piety, how it was nourished by a continued recourse to God. . . . He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else; and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of countenance that was next to shining; it discovered what he had been doing, and gave me double hope of receiving wise direction in the matter about which I came to consult him. In all his motions he attended to the will of God." (Whitehead's Life.)

Let us notice that it is Mr. Gambold whom Richard Watson, in his "Life of Wesley," describes as being "eminent in holiness," who had such a high opinion of Wesley's piety before he went to America to preach the Gospel. And is it likely that a man so "eminent in holiness" as Gambold was, could write about Wesley as he did if he had thought him to be an unconverted man? No, we must conclude from this

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testimony that Gambold really believed that Wesley at that time was converted to God.

II. If Wesley was converted to God before he went to America, what was he *groaning after and praying for when his heart was so strangely warmed while he attended the society meeting in Aldersgate Street?* He was first groaning after the witness of the Spirit, a sure confidence that he was a child of God; but he was groaning after something more than that. And we ask: "After what was he groaning?" Wishing to find a correct answer to this important question, I have diligently searched the writings of Mr. Wesley. And what do I find? I find that after that wonderful change in the life and experience of Wesley which occurred in 1725 (when he at the age of twenty-two entered into holy orders), at which time he began to alter the whole form of his conversation, "and to set in earnest upon a new life"—he also began right away to "aim at and pray for inward holiness." And I believe that he at that time (1725) was reclaimed and accepted of

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God—the God of his childhood. I find further that from that time it was not really sin as a guilt—sin unforgiven—that troubled Wesley so much; it was sin as an impurity; sin that had not been washed away from his heart. In that year he read Taylor's "Holy Living and Dying," which produced a wonderful effect upon his heart. "In reading several parts of this book," Mr. Wesley writes, "I was exceedingly affected; that part in particular which relates to purity of intention. Instantly I resolved to dedicate all my life to God, all my thoughts, and words, and actions; being thoroughly convinced, there was no medium; but that every part of my life (not some only) must either be a sacrifice to God, or myself, that is, in effect, to the devil." This quotation is from "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection," as believed and thought by Mr. Wesley from the year 1725 to the year 1777, after which year it is understood that his sentiments concerning Christian Perfection were not changed. (Works, Vol. VI., p. 483.)

In 1726 Mr. Wesley "met with

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Kempis's 'Christian's Pattern,'" which taught him in a stronger light than he had ever seen it before, the necessity of giving *all* his heart to God.

In 1727 or 1728 Mr. Law's "Christian Perfection" and "Serious Call" were put into his hands. These convinced him more than ever of the necessity of being *all* devoted to God, to give Him all his soul, body, and substance (Works, Vol. VI., p. 484). In reading these books, he remarks: "The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul that everything appeared in a new view." He writes about his experience in 1730: "I omitted no occasion of doing good; I, for that reason, suffered evil. And all this I knew to be nothing unless it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly this, the image of God, was what I aimed at in all." (Works, Vol. III., p. 72.) From these observations made by Mr. Wesley himself it is safe to say that he, from the time of his ordination in 1725, was aiming at "inward holiness," "the image of God," "purity of intention," and a full dedication of all his life to God.

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In his "Plain Account of Christian Perfection" Wesley writes: "On January 1, 1733, I preached before the university in St. Mary's Church on 'The Circumcision of the Heart,' an account of which I gave in these words: 'It is that habitual disposition of soul which, in the sacred writings, is termed holiness; and which directly implies, the being cleansed from sin, from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit.'" "This was," Mr. Wesley continues, "the view of religion I then had, which even then I scrupled not to call *perfection*. This is the view I have of it now, without any material addition or diminution. . . . In the same sentiment did my brother and I remain . . . till we embarked for America, in the latter end of 1735. It was the next year, while I was at Savannah, that I wrote the following lines:

"Is there a thing beneath the sun
That strives with thee my heart to share?
Ah! tear it thence, and reign alone,
The Lord of every motion there!"

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“In the beginning of the year 1738, as I was returning from thence the cry of my heart was:

“O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone!
O may Thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown!
Strange fires far from my heart remove;
My every act, word, thought, be love!”
(Works, Vol. VI, p. 485.)

It will thus be seen that Wesley when he returned from America was hungering and thirsting after a pure heart filled with pure love alone.

Mr. Wesley remarks further: “In August following” (that was about three months after his heart had been so strangely warmed at the meeting in Aldersgate Street) “I had a long conversation with Arvid Gradin in Germany. After he had given me an account of his experience, I desired him to give me, in writing, a definition of ‘the full assurance of faith,’ which he did in the following words: *‘Requies in sanguine Christi; firma fiducia in Deum, et persuasio de gratia divina; tranquillitas mentis summa, atque*

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serenitas et pax, cum absentia omnis desiderii carnalis, et cessatione peccatorum etiam internorum. Repose in the blood of Christ; a firmer confidence in God, and persuasion of His favor, the highest tranquility, serenity, and peace of mind, with a deliverance from every fleshly desire, and a cessation of all, even inward sins.'

"This," continues Mr. Wesley, "was the first account I ever heard from any living man of what I had before learned myself from the oracles of God, and had been praying for (with the little company of my friends), and expecting for several years." (Works, Vol. VI., p. 486.)

Now, what was this experience which Mr. Gradin related, and which Mr. Wesley, in August, 1738, had been praying for, and expecting, for several years? Although Mr. Gradin called this experience "The full assurance of faith," it was what Wesley called "Christian Perfection," and it was this experience which he, according to his own words, "Had been praying for, and expecting, for several

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years" before that remarkable evening in Aldersgate Street, May 24, 1738.

In referring to his tract called "The Character of a Methodist," published in 1739, Mr. Wesley remarks: "These are the very words wherein I largely declared, for the first time, my sentiments of Christian perfection. And, is it not easy to see (1) That this is the very point at which I aimed all along from the year 1725, when I began to be *homo unius libri*, 'a man of one book,' regarding none, comparatively, but the Bible?" Works, Vol. VI., pp. 486-488.)

It will be seen from the foregoing observations that what Mr. Wesley had been praying for and groaning after since 1725 was (1) The witness of the Spirit and (2) "inward holiness," "the image of God," a heart cleansed from inward sin and "Christian perfection." Such were his prayers and the inward groanings of his soul that evening when he attended the society meeting at Aldersgate Street, where he about a quarter before nine felt his "heart strangely warmed"

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so he was enabled to say, "I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."

And now we are prepared to ask, What blessing did Mr. Wesley receive at that solemn moment? He received what he was praying for and groaning after. He, who at that time had the faith of a servant and was accepted of God (Sermon "On Faith") received (1) The witness of the Spirit to his adoption as a child of God, and (2) he was cleansed from inward sin and made perfect in love—unless we should believe that a father would give his son a stone when he asked him for a loaf of bread (Luke xi., 11-13).

If any one will object: This is not the accepted order in which Methodists generally teach and experience adoption and sanctification, we will answer that, Though this objection may be well founded at the present day, there was at that time no Methodist doctrine formulated, and the great founder of Methodism was then en-

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deavoring to reconcile experience to doctrine, so that he later on could be enabled to formulate Methodist doctrine; but one thing is sure, and that is, that Wesley's experience at that time was in perfect harmony with the doctrine of his Moravian teachers, Spangenberg, Böhler, and Zinzendorf, who taught that "as soon as any one is justified . . . his heart is as pure as it will ever be," and "that there is no justifying faith where there is ever any doubt or fear, or where there is not in the full sense a new, a clean heart" (Works, Vol. III., pp. 59, 182, 190, 222); this doctrine they called: "The full assurance of faith," and at that time Wesley did his utmost to believe that doctrine, and it was done unto him according to his faith.

I am well aware that weighty objections can be made to the position I have taken. I will mention a few: (1) It may be objected that Wesley himself writes: "The faith I want is (the faith of a son). A sure trust and confidence in God, that, through the merits of Christ, my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favor of God." Yes,

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this quotation shows that Wesley was groaning after the witness of the Spirit; but he continues on the same page to say that he also wanted "that faith which none can have without knowing that he hath it," and then he tells us that whosoever hath that faith which he wanted is "freed from sin, the whole body of sin is destroyed in him; he is freed from fear;" "and he is freed from doubt, having the love of God shed abroad in his heart, through the Holy Ghost which is given unto him." (Works, Vol. III., p. 57.) From these remarks it will be seen that Wesley was not only seeking the witness of the Spirit, but he was also seeking entire sanctification—the perfect destruction of the whole body of sin; he was seeking to be entirely "freed from doubt," and "freed from fear," which is the same as to be made perfect in love, because "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John iv, 18); in other words, Wesley was seeking all that was included in what the Moravians called, "The full assurance of faith," or what Wesley called "Christian perfection;"

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he was therefore seeking Christian perfection as well as the witness of the Spirit.

(2) It may also be objected that Wesley several months after the meeting at Aldersgate Street wrote in his Journal (October 14, 1738): "I have not that joy in the Holy Ghost; no settled lasting joy. Nor have I such a peace as excludes the possibility either of fear or doubt." And a few days later, October 23, 1738, he wrote a letter to his brother, Samuel, in which he remarks: "For the seal of the Spirit, the love of God shed abroad in my heart, and producing joy in the Holy Ghost, joy which no man taketh away, joy unspeakable and full of glory—this witness of the Spirit I have not; but I wait patiently for it." (Tyerman, Vol. I., p. 190.) And on January 4, 1739, Wesley wrote: "My friends affirm that I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm I am not a Christian now" (Works, Vol. III., p. 117); and one of the reasons he gives for this is that he did not (as he thought) love God. Now, if these remarks made by Mr.

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Wesley are to prove that he was not sanctified at the meeting in Aldersgate Street, May 24, 1738, they prove too much; because if they prove anything they prove that he did not even at that time receive the witness of the Spirit to his adoption as a child of God, and that he was not so much as a Christian after the time referred to. But it is generally (and justly) admitted by the Church that, although Mr. Wesley wrote as he did, he received the witness of the Spirit, May 24, 1738; but as he was praying for and aiming at "inward holiness," just as much as he was praying for the witness of the Spirit, why should it not be believed that he experienced the one as well as the other?

In regard to the seemingly contradictory statement made by Wesley under this critical period of his experience, I wish to say that the many conflicting influences which were brought to bear upon him at that time must be remembered and taken into consideration. While he in the great earnestness of his soul was striving to escape the "papistical error of laying too

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much stress on outward works," he was stumbling against the Lutheran and Calvinistic expositions which "magnified faith to such an amazing size that it quite hid all the rest of the commandments," and thus his peace was disturbed. The friends of Mr. Wesley affirmed (he says) that he was mad; but we, who can read his Journal and some of his letters, in which we can see how earnestly he was groaning after the witness of the Spirit and the blessing of a pure heart—fighting against the "fiery darts of the evil one," we know that he was only caught in a labyrinth of conflicting doctrines and well-meaning (but contradicting) counsels which confused and bewildered the honest and humble seeker after truth, so that he who on May 24, 1738, had been baptized with the Spirit and with fire; he who had received the witness of the Spirit to his adoption as a child of God; he who had been sanctified wholly and made perfect in love; he who after years of anxious seeking and praying for "inward holiness," at last had received the blessing of a pure heart, so that

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he five days later (May 29, 1738) was enabled to write: "I have constant peace—not one uneasy thought; and I have freedom from sin—not one unholy desire" (Works, Vol. III., p. 75)—he had at times (because he was misguided) reason to cry in the anguish of his soul: "Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying; my throat is dried; mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." (Psa. 69, 1-3.) But then, as he was waiting with patience, he came out victoriously so that he was enabled to say: "Now, I am always conqueror." (Works, Vol. III., p. 74.) "I waited patiently for the Lord and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He put a new song into my mouth, even praise unto our God." (Psa. 40, 1-3.)

What was the reason for this (Wesley's) unsettled state of mind? It

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was partly the unscriptural Moravian doctrine on justification and sanctification that disturbed him. It must, however, be acknowledged that after Wesley had come in contact with the Moravians, and he had been led to throw what little faith he had overboard, they were to a certain extent a great help and comfort to him. But this connection with the Moravians was not an unmixed good.

When Mr. Wesley, January 4, 1739, wrote: "I affirm I am not a Christian now," he had reached the bottom of his despair. This was, I believe, the last time he wrote so discouragingly in his Journal concerning his own experience.

The time was now drawing near when Wesley should forever shake off the unscriptural doctrine of the English Moravians: "That there are *no degrees* in faith; that none has any faith who has ever any doubt or fear; and that none is justified till he has a clean heart, with the perpetual indwelling of Christ, and of the Holy Ghost." (Works, Vol. III., p. 182.)

When Wesley, November 7, 1739,

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had a long conference with Mr. Spangenberg, the great Moravian preacher, whom Count Zinzendorf had sent to effect a reconciliation with Mr. Wesley (Works, Vol. II., p. 221), he had already then Scriptural light enough to oppose this doctrine. He remarks: "I agreed with all he (Mr. Spangenberg) said of the power of faith. I agreed that 'whosoever is' by faith 'born of God doth not commit sin;' but I could not agree . . . that none has any faith, so long as he is liable to any doubt or fear." (Works, Vol. III., p. 167.) Formerly Wesley was much troubled because he had doubts and fears, and he dared not, on that account, to believe himself justified and a child of God. He was so thought by the Moravians; but now he had fortunately commenced to disagree with his Moravian teachers.

On July 20, 1740, Mr. Wesley withdrew from the half Moravian society at Fetter-lane, partly because they asserted: "That there is no such thing as a *weak faith*; that there is no justifying faith where there is ever any doubt or fear, or where there is not, in the

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full sense, a new, a clean heart." When Wesley had read his statement before the society he closed by saying: "Nothing now remains, but that I should give you up to God. You that are of the same judgment, follow me." Then Wesley withdrew from the society at Fetter-lane, as did eighteen or nineteen of the society. On July 23, Wesley wrote: "Our little company met at the Foundry instead of Fetter-lane." (Works, Vol. III., p. 191.) This was, indeed, a great and blessed move in the right direction.

Mr. Wesley had now learned to distinguish between justification and sanctification. Now he saw clearly that a person could be justified, have his sins forgiven, and yet not be wholly sanctified. As Wesley did not comprehend this when he was baptized with the Holy Ghost and with the divine fire that warmed his heart so strangely at the meeting in Aldersgate Street, he was once more bewildered in regard to his own personal experience, and he came in doubt and darkness. But when the bright rays from the Sun of Righteousness "divided the light from

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the darkness" and scattered the Moravian fog that had surrounded him, which had obscured the true Scriptural relation of justification to sanctification so that he could not distinguish one from the other, then, led by the Holy Spirit, he emerged as with one leap from the fog and darkness, from doubt and fear, into the highway of the Lord, "the way of holiness," on which the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy, he had restored unto him the joy of the Lord, full and free salvation, which he first received at the meeting in Aldersgate Street, but which he had lost for a short time because he had been entangled and misled by wrong ideas; but from that time his path was that of the just, "as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And the subsequent career of Mr. Wesley proves overwhelmingly that he from that time (January, 1739) enjoyed as well as preached entire sanctification.

When Wesley saw that a person could be justified, have his sins forgiven, and be restored to the favor of

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God, without being wholly sanctified, then he understood himself, then he knew what his experience had been from 1725 to May 24, 1738, hence the appended notes referred to in his Journal (Works, Vol. III., p. 56). And when he had the question about his conversion settled it did not take him long to see what the blessing was that he received at the Aldersgate Street meeting. As long as the question of his conversion was unsettled in his mind, everything else in connection with his religious experience was unsettled, and therefore it was impossible for him to have any lasting rest and peace. And when, therefore, this was settled in his mind as well as in his experience, he threw his doubts and fears to the wind, and from that time we see him wandering from place to place like a spiritual conqueror proclaiming the glad tidings of free and full salvation, through faith in Christ, to the many thousands that flocked around him wherever he went, and many precious souls were saved; so full was he of the Spirit that he on May 20, 1739, wrote concerning his

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feelings when preaching: "My soul was so enlarged that me thought I could have cried out (in another sense than poor vain Archimedes) 'give me where to stand, and I will shake the earth.' " (Works, Vol. III., p. 133.) And as Wesley had where to stand—he stood on the Rock of Ages—he did shake the world with his powerful preaching in his day, and he is shaking the world still—through the Church which he founded.

God is still able to adopt and cleanse from all unrighteousness at one and the same time as he did with Wesley; the reason why this is not oftener done is not because God is unable to do it, but because the sinner, as a rule, does not at first see and feel the necessity of more than the forgiveness of his sins. Unforgiven sin is the burden under which he groans, and which he prays God to take away and blot out. And when he believes that Christ, the Son of man, has power on earth to forgive sin, then "according to his faith it is done unto him" (Matt 9, 29), and his sins are forgiven him. But who will attempt to limit the power of God by

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saying that He was not able and willing at the same moment to have cleansed him from all unrighteousness if he had felt sin as an impurity as much as he felt it as a guilt, and if he had believed that the blood of Jesus Christ was able to cleanse him from all sin as well as to reconcile him to God? But it was otherwise with Mr. Wesley, who right along from 1725 to the evening of May 24, 1738, had aimed at, prayed for and expected the blessing of "inward holiness," and who later on had been instructed by his Moravian teachers to believe "that none is justified till he has a clean heart," and, therefore, when he that evening believed, it was done unto him according to his faith, he received what he was expecting, groaning after, and praying for.

We have thus seen Mr. Wesley emerge from the cold and dead established Church of England, we have seen him somewhat bewildered and perplexed by his Moravian friends in regard to the doctrine and experience of adoption and entire sanctification, and we have seen him grope through

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the dense darkness of disappointment, temptation, and unbelief in search of light from above, pressing forward until his poor troubled heart was warmed so strangely by the heavenly fire kindled by his Divine Master, who came to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

Through many temptations, unceasing prayer, and diligent searching in the Word of God, Wesley found himself at last in full enjoyment of a free salvation through Christ. He went forward, step by step, guided by the Spirit of God, having every experience he enjoyed and every doctrine he taught thoroughly tested by and soundly founded upon the unfailing Word of God, whereby he was enabled to give the Church he founded the following profound explanation of the witness of the Spirit: "*The testimony of the Spirit is an inward impression on the soul, whereby the Spirit of God directly witnesses to my spirit, that I am a child of God; that Jesus Christ hath loved me and given Himself for me, and that all my sins are blotted out, and I, even I, am reconciled to*

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God." Though Mr. Wesley was seeking for years before that testimony sounded so sweetly in his soul, he heard it at last, and was thus qualified to give us the clearest definition of this great work of grace that has ever fallen from uninspired lips.

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